

Mold Growth In Buildings



Guidance • Support • Prevention • Protection

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Today's Presentation

- Introduction to mold
- Role of Town Health Officers
- Building compliance
- Health effects

What is Mold?

- Mold/mildew is the common name for a filamentous fungus
- 1000's of species of fungus
- Can vary in type, color and texture
- Grows anywhere with moisture, food & shade
- Growth within 24-48 hours

Approach to Mold Calls

- Frequent source of complaints
- Focus on building complaints
- Keep personal injury and building complaints separate
- Don't get involved in personal injury; refer to primary care provider
- Controversial, heavily litigated

Advice for mold related calls

- VDH does not recommend air sampling for mold because:
 - Smelling or seeing mold is enough to indicate a problem
 - Standards do not exist to compare to results

Mold in the Living Space

- Growth indicates presence of water
- Building maintenance problem
- Not necessarily a health problem
- Eliminate leak
- Fix water damage either by rapid drying or replacement of water damaged material

Role of Town Health Officers

- Conduct an investigation after receiving information regarding a condition that may be a public health hazard
- Enforce the provisions of Title 18
- Prevent, remove, or destroy any public health hazard, or mitigate any significant public health risk in accordance with Title 18

Investigation: Protocol

- Bring: camera, flashlight, inspection questionnaire
- Visible mold or damp wood
 - Find source then advise to mitigate
- Smelled or suspected
 - Advise to mitigate

Inspection: Where to Look for Mold

- Basements or attics
- Flooded areas
- Bathrooms, kitchens, closets
- Where food is stored
- Around the refrigerator, A/C, (de)humidifiers
- Mattresses, furniture
- Windowsills, caulking
- Carpeting
- Summer cottages, barns, greenhouses

Mitigation of Small Areas: Cleaning/Removal Advice

- On hard surfaces, clean with any detergent
- If using bleach solution
 - 1 cup bleach: 1 gallon water
 - Never mix bleach with ammonia or cleaners
 - Use non-porous gloves and a mask
 - Ventilate the area
- If mold due to sewage leak-advise professional cleaning

Mold in Rental Housing

- Visible mold growth indicates excessive moisture and/or standing water
- Excessive moisture and periodic or regular standing water is a violation of Section VIII. C. Vermont Rental Housing Health Code
- Inform the landlord in writing about the Rental Housing Health Code violation
- Request voluntary compliance
- Re-investigate in 30 days

Mitigation: specifically for landlords

- Vermont Rental Health Housing Code says:
 - *"Every dwelling, dwelling unit, rooming house or rooming unit shall be maintained to be free from the regular or periodic appearance of standing water or excessive moisture which may result in visible mold growth."* See Section VIII. C.
- Seek voluntary compliance from landlords
- They have 30 days:
 - Stop water intrusion
 - Prioritize structural damage

Landlord Information continued

- Direct landlords to EPA guidelines
- For large buildings, advise to hire contractor
- No licensing or certification requirements exist for “mold abatement” contractors
- Inform landlord they are in violation of the rental housing health code and they must come into compliance

Prevention of Mold Growth

- Use household vents
- Store perishables in refrigerator or zip-locks
- Don't carpet damp areas
- Dehumidify
- Clean damp areas often
- If use “mold inhibitor” products, read instructions fully
- Take steps to prevent leaking

Potential Health Effects

- Many myths re: toxic black mold- unfounded
Mold is not generally harmful
- Some people experience problems
- Possible negative health responses:
 - *General irritation*
 - *Allergy/hay fever response*
 - *Allergy/asthma response*
 - *Hypersensitivity response*
 - *Serious fungal infection in immunocompromised*

Reaction Susceptibility

- Susceptibility depends on:
 - Amount
 - Length of exposure
 - Genetics
 - Individual health
- VDH and CDC agree that living in damp indoor environments can cause negative health effects
- Refer to a health care provider

Resources:

- Call the CDC: 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636); <http://www.cdc.gov/health/mold.html>
- The EPA's free, downloadable: *Guide to mold, moisture, and your home*:
<http://www.epa.gov/mold/moldguide.html>
- If damaged area is 10+ square feet, consult EPA's: *Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings*. Call 1-800-438-4318 or http://www.epa.gov/mold/mold_remediation.htm

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